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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 001739

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SUBJECT: ICRC ON THE DISPLACED IN PAKISTAN

Classified By: Gerald M, Feierstein for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a July 23 meeting with Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) Eric Schwartz, International Committee of the Red Cross Head of Delegation Pascal Cuttat expressed concern over the speed of government-facilitated IDP return from the camps and the coercion by low-level government camp officials in ensuring that return. He expected some secondary displacement due to insecurity and ongoing fighting in Swat, northern Buner, and Upper Dir. While access has been an issue, ICRC has found that the government accepts its "right to protect" and is receptive to its concerns. On prison visits, ICRC can meet freely with security detainees in Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and Sindh, but not in Balochistan and Punjab. With its partner, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, ICRC runs displacement camps for a total of 50,000 people in Malakand, Nowshera, Swabi and Lower Dir Districts and also assists approximately 450,000 people outside of camps, including both displaced persons and host families. The government has asked ICRC to open up another camp in Lower Dir to accommodate the new influx of displaced from Upper Dir and those displaced now leaving the shelter of schools. Cuttat expressed the hope that the GOP could be convinced in Waziristan not to think just in terms of containing the militants but would also allow sufficient access for provision of humanitarian assistance. End summary.

¶2. (C) In a July 23 meeting with PRM A/S Eric Schwartz, ICRC Head of Delegation Pascal Cuttat said that he expected hesitation on the part of some of the displaced families staying in host communities to return home and also expected some secondary displacement due to insecurity and ongoing fighting in Swat north of Mingora (particularly in Matta and Kabal tehsils), northern Buner, and Upper Dir. Cuttat said that ICRC currently has its staff "everywhere except Matta and Kabal." He said that while access has been an issue, the Government of Pakistan accepts ICRC's "right to protect." Lt. General Nadeem, who heads the GOP's relief effort, and his staff have accepted ICRC's views on return. Asked about ICRC's customary prison visits, Cuttat said ICRC can visit prisons in NWFP and in Sindh and can see prisoners privately, including security detainees. Prisons in Balochistan are blocked, however, and access in Punjab prisons is restricted. Cuttat estimated, based on open sources, that the number of security detainees held in Pakistan was in the thousands.

¶3. (SBU) Cuttat said that ICRC's cooperation with UN agencies was good and that division of labor with UNHCR on

displacement camp management was along geographic lines. ICRC, in cooperation with its partner the Pakistani Red Crescent Society (PRCS), runs two camps in Malakand District, as well as the Benzir Camp in Nowshera, Shah Mansour Camp in Swabi, and three camps in Lower Dir. (The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies - IFRC- supports PRCS and its relief activities while ICRC also supports its capacity development.) The GOP has asked ICRC to open up another camp in Lower Dir to accommodate the new influx of displaced from Upper Dir and those displaced who are required to leave school buildings before school begins again in August. ICRC also helps displaced residing with host families and in targets areas where there are not UN humanitarian hubs. Unlike the UN, ICRC does not use GOP-verified lists for its distributions and will assist displaced who may or may not be registered as well as the host families. Cuttat estimated that ICRC was assisting 450,000 people outside the camps and 50,000 displaced in camps. In assisting returnees, ICRC will go where others will not but does not want to be just in these high-risk areas. In most conflict areas, ICRC is the only international humanitarian assistance entity.

14. (C) Like UNHCR counterparts, Cuttat expressed concerns about allegations of coercion by government representatives pressing those internally displaced residing in camps to return home. Government officials, he said, were telling those in camps that, "If you don't go now, you will have to pay your own way, you won't get your money, and the camps will be closed." (Note: In a separate conversation, UNHCR Assistant Representative Kilian Kleinschmidt reaffirmed that

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the disbursement of the government-pledged PKR 25,000 - approximately USD 305 - per family was not officially linked to return. Cuttat's reference was probably to misrepresentation by camp officials of the established procedures. Such misrepresentation has been observed by others.) Cuttat added that he was certain that Lt. General Nadeem did not want coerced returns but that they were happening nonetheless. Of further concern was that the locations for return were "not as safe as they could or should be." Even in the "secured" city of Mingora, curfews and restrictions severely limited access to food and medical care; the army was now moving the last of the elements of resistance off the main road and into the alleyways, and as a result, people could often not leave their homes. It was very hard for widows, women alone, and women head of households to get supplies and health care, let alone benefits.

15. (C) Cuttat acknowledged the large proportion of spontaneous returns, particularly to Buner. However, he said he was concerned about the speed of the return process since July 13 (the implementation start date of the government's plan for facilitated return) and the lack of the possibility for IDPs who are part of the facilitated return to go have a look before returning. While noting that this situation was not/not a "drama" in which people would be unable to survive in their place of return, he summarized that his "main worry" was "the speed of return combined with the message being delivered by low-level functionaries." He did not expect secondary displacement to be massive.

16. (C) Cuttat expressed concern about the possibility of the return of conflict to areas of recovery and the risk that if there is a security incident involving humanitarian assistance providers or if one such entity made an "ill-perceived" move, the efforts of the entire humanitarian assistance community could be affected adversely.

17. (C) Asked what he would like A/S Schwartz to take back to Washington, Cuttat said that he was not/not asking at this point for U.S. intervention on behalf of ICRC but might in the future. He said that the return of the displaced from the camps was in accordance with understandable political

objectives and strategies but done in too much haste. With regard to Waziristan, he expressed the hope that the GOP could be convinced not to think just in terms of containing the militants but would also allow sufficient access for provision of humanitarian assistance.

18. (U) Assistant Secretary Schwartz has cleared this cable.  
FEIERSTEIN